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# VIving

**THIS PAGE** in the living/dining room of a Paris home, chair by Pierre Jeanneret; coffee table by Joseph Dirand; desk by Pierre Chareau; chandelier by Philippe Anthoinez; artwork (above fireplace) by Angel Alonso; artworks by artists unknown. Turn the page for the full story.



**THESE PAGES** in the entrance hall of this Paris apartment, **sofa** by T. H. Robsjohn-Gibbons; **chair** by Gianni Moscatelli; **bench** by Folke Bensow; **candlestick** (on marble plinth) by Rick Owens; alabaster **pendant light** by Joseph Dirand; **artwork** (on wall) by Jannis Kounellis; black mirror **artwork** (on door) by Lawrence Carroll; mask **artwork** (on opposite wall) by Thomas Houseago. *Details, last pages.*



# Innate Sense

Architect Joseph Dirand has a reputation for designing refined and intuitive spaces, and this approach has held him in good stead in his new family apartment, a serene oasis in Paris.

By Dana Thomas Photographed by Adrien Dirand



**I**t was probably inevitable that Joseph Dirand would go into architecture and his brother Adrien would turn to photography. The pair are sons of Jacques Dirand, one of the decor world's pre-eminent photographers. Throughout their childhood in Paris, they'd hover over the light box, loupe to eye, and gaze at the mesmeric locales their father had captured on 35mm slides. "Venetian palaces, Palladian villas, artists' houses, masters' ateliers, cabinets of curiosity, princesses' boudoirs, Tuscan castles, Napoleonic apartments, fishermen's huts," Adrien, who took the pictures for this story, wrote in *Joseph Dirand: Interior*, an impressive tome published by Rizzoli several years ago. "We would relive these trips with few words, passion, and a hint of mischief." That's also an apt way to describe Joseph's work. He sees his approach as "ornamental minimalism," he explains on a winter Friday night at his new home on the Right Bank. "I create space with equilibrium and a classic base." Yet "there are details and compositions," he says, like mixing marble powder into cement to give it a glistening silkiness, or painting mirrored closet doors with foggy, Turner-esque murals, or scorching silver-clad kitchen cabinets to evoke the smoky allure of a Belle Époque bordello. This would be the mischief.

Joseph Dirand, his wife, Anso Bilet Dirand, an events planner, and their two daughters (each from their previous marriages) lived for six years on the Left Bank. But with a baby on the way, they needed to upsize. They searched without much luck — even in Paris, "a noble building is hard to find," he says. Then their landlord mentioned a flat available in a building constructed on the Passy hill as a hotel for the Exposition Universelle of 1900.

As soon as Dirand laid eyes on the 242-square-metre space, with its picture-postcard view of Paris, he knew he'd found what he'd been looking for, and how he would make it his. "I've spent my career putting together settings for others, but rarely do I get to do it for myself," he says. "So I was very precise about what I wanted. Design for me must always serve its function — a space well studied delivering a certain quality of life."

Clearly, stone is Dirand's preferred material. Walls, flat surfaces, baths are all in soft-tone stone or marble — often cut from massive blocks he purchased years ago and stored, "waiting for the right moment". As with all his commissions — which currently include a ground-up resort on Norman's Cay in the Bahamas and interiors for the new Rosewood hotel on London's Grosvenor Square, as well as design-world favourites like Paris's Loulou and Monsieur Bleu (where he met Anso, a former manager there), The Surf Club in Miami, and Le Jardinier and Shun in New York — he brought on his favourite artisans, who know how to execute his "taste for details", as he puts it.

Like the three majestic Massangis limestone-trimmed arches down the left side of the entrance hall, which give way to the sprawling living/dining room. Arches for Dirand "are more a vocabulary for a house than an apartment," he says. Here they create the air of "a mini-palazzo", with edges that were hand-rounded by masons "to capture the light, and to create a continuous line, like a ribbon that carries on".

In the kitchen, his teenage daughter Ninon does her homework at a vanilla-hued island carved from a hunk of breccia stazzema marble he purchased directly from the quarry and saved for five years. "I love the thick width of the base and how the veins run down it," he says. "You see the mass." The powder room is walled with breccia verde marble he picked up in Italy. "This material is like a landscape." The master bath is enrobed with paonazzo marble "from the mountains above Carrara". He even employs mineral materials for key furnishings, such as the white travertine dining table and the estremoz coffee table.

Through a neoclassical limestone pedimented doorway at the end of the entrance hall — "very 17th-century Italian," he points out — is the family's private quarters. In the narrow hallway prowls a sleek bronze-and-gold lioness with auric eyes — a sculpture by Harumi Klossowska de Rola, the daughter of Balthus. Throughout the home, creatures abound — an adorable Lalanne lamb, a vintage scarab table by French mid-century ceramicist Georges Jouve, a taxidermy owl from the Paris natural science shop Deyrolle. More mischief.

The overall palette is "natural tints," Dirand says, motioning toward the tobacco-hued Versailles parquet and walls and furniture in off-whites, pale greens and the lightest of greys — a neutral canvas devised to set off his extensive modern, abstract and Arte Povera art collection. He walks to the salon's bookcase and pulls open a hidden compartment: a turntable deck. "My wife DJs," he says with a laugh. She also does the cooking for their frequent dinner parties. On the menu for that evening: watercress soup, osso buco and risotto Milanese, for 12. "I work in fantasy and construct a framework for living," he says. "And she makes it live." [VL josephdirand.com](http://josephdirand.com)

"I've spent my career putting together settings for others, but rarely do I get to do it for myself... Design for me must always serve its function — a space well studied delivering a certain quality of life"

JOSEPH DIRAND

**THIS PAGE** owners Joseph Dirand and Anso Bilet Dirand in the kitchen; custom **banquette** by Joseph Dirand; **table** by Ettore Sottsass; **Métropole no. 305 chairs** by Jean Prouvé; **Roma stool** by Joseph Dirand; **pendant light** by Eric Schmitt; **Sakalava wood-and-leather shield** (on shelf, from left) from Madagascar; **photograph** by Francois Halard; **artwork** by Nicolas Lefebvre; **artwork** by Sterling Ruby; other artworks by artists unknown.



# "I create space with equilibrium and a classic base"

JOSEPH DIRAND



**THESE PAGES** in the living/dining room, sofa and chairs by Pierre Jeanneret; coffee table by Joseph Dirand; 1918 desk by Pierre Chareau; chandelier by Philippe Anthonioz; artwork (on left wall) by Elliot Dubail; artwork (above fireplace) by Angel Alonso.



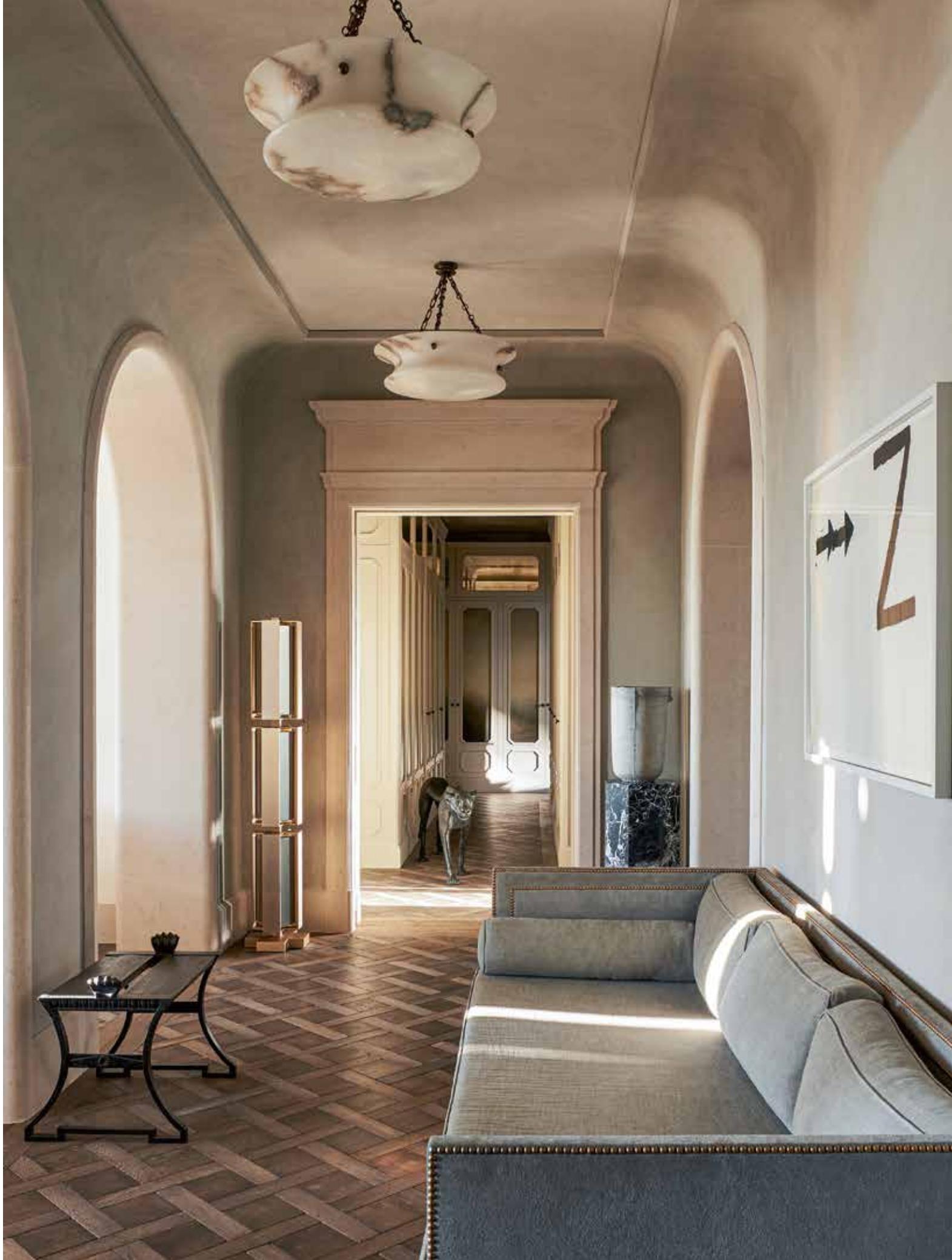


**THIS PAGE** Anso Bilet Dirand and Joseph Dirand in another view of the living/dining room; Living Divani sofa, enquiries to Space Furniture; artwork by Thomas Houseago. **OPPOSITE PAGE** in another view of the kitchen, breccia stazzema marble *island* by Joseph Dirand; chandelier by Philippe Anthionoz; Gelule wall light by Joseph Dirand for Ozone; artwork by Sterling Ruby.



**THIS PAGE** in another view of the living/dining room, breccia stazzema marble and brass **console** and Alvar **dining table**, both by Joseph Dirand; **chair** and **bench** (in foreground) by Pierre Jeanneret; Tomb **chair** by Rick Owens; **floor lamp** by Mathieu Matégot; **artwork** (on left) by Laurence Carroll; **artwork** (at centre) by Harold Ancart; **artwork** (on right) by Jacob Kassay. **OPPOSITE PAGE** in another view of the entrance hall, Totem **floor lamp** by Joseph Dirand; **artwork** by Jannis Kounellis; bronze-and-gold lioness **sculpture** by Harumi Klossowska de Rola.









“I work in fantasy and construct a framework for living. And Anso makes it live”

JOSEPH DIRAND

THESE PAGES in the main bedroom, armchair by Oscar Niemeyer; sofa from Knoll; console by Charlotte Perriand; Scarabée side table by Georges Jouve; lamb sculpture by François-Xavier Lalanne; artwork (on top shelf, right) by Nicolas Lefebvre; artwork (on right wall) by Sergej Jensen; other artworks by artists unknown. *Details, last pages.*